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## HUMAN SYMPATHY.

"If thou at all take thy neighbour's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him by that the sun goeth down<sup>1</sup>."

"And if he be a poor man, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge; thou shalt surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goeth down<sup>2</sup>."

One text saith: "By that the sun goeth down;" and the other text saith: "When the sun riseth." From these expressions thou shalt know that as thou art bound to restore the pledge wherein he sleepeth "By that the sun goeth down;" so if the pledge be his ploughshare, shalt thou rise early and return it unto him at sunrise.

"In his day thou shalt give him his hire<sup>3</sup>." This text hath a two-fold meaning; in this wise canst thou explain it:—The labourer goeth by the way followed by his ass, and one selleth unto him a sheaf of corn which he placeth upon his shoulder, and the ass followeth him with longing eyes upon the sheaf. When he cometh home he putteth the ass into the stable, and the sheaf he tieth above his reach.

Then would one say unto him, "Thou wicked one! All the way hath he followed thee, longing for the sheaf, and now thou givest it not unto him." So is it with an hireling who laboreth all the day and looketh forward for his wage, "and setteth his heart upon it<sup>4</sup>."

And thus is it written: "I will hear, for I am gracious<sup>5</sup>."

"If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry<sup>6</sup>." If thou hast naught to give unto him, comfort him with words. Say unto him, "I am grieved in my soul for thee, that I have naught that I can give thee." So shalt thou "draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul<sup>7</sup>."

*Midrash Rabba Levit.*, XXXIV, 15.

There are eight degrees in charity, ascending step by step.

The highest degree—for than this can there be none higher—is that thou takest by the hand thy brother who is poor and bestowest a gift upon him, or lendest unto him, or findest work for him to do, that he may be independent, and neither want nor be compelled to ask aught of his fellow-creatures.

This is the meaning of "Thou shalt uphold him<sup>8</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxiv. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xxiv. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Idem.

<sup>5</sup> Exod. xxii. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. lviii. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Idem.

<sup>8</sup> Lev. xxv. 35.

The next degree is that thou givest unto the poor, but knowest not unto whom thou givest, and the poor man knoweth not whence cometh the gift.

Akin to this form of charity is adding to the congregational charity store, but it is only fitting that thou shouldst do this when thou knowest that the almoner is faithful and wise in the apportioning thereof.

The next degree is when thou knowest unto whom thou givest, but the poor man knoweth not from whom he taketh. (The wise men of old went in secret and threw their money into the doorways of the deserving poor.) And this is a virtuous act, if peradventure the public almoner apportioneth without discretion.

The next degree is when the poor man knoweth from whom he receiveth, but the giver knoweth not unto whom he giveth; according to the way of the wise men of old, who tied money into bundles, and as they went threw it behind them that the poor might come and take and have no shame.

The next degree is that thou givest unto the poor man less than he asketh of thee, with a smile upon thy face.

The next degree is that thou givest, but givest with a pang.

*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah*, Chap. 149.

If a poor man and woman beg of thee, thou shalt first give unto the woman and then unto the man.

*Idem*, Chap. 251.

Let man ever hold himself aloof from receiving charity, and rather suffer distress than depend upon his fellow-creatures. And this have the wise men commanded: "Be as frugal on thy Sabbath as on other days, if indulging in the delights of the Sabbath should make thee dependent upon thy fellow-creatures."

Even if a man be learned and distinguished but poor, he should learn a trade however humble, that he may not be dependent upon others.

*Idem*, Chap. 253.

A slave that hath fled to the land of Israel from another land, he shall not be brought back to servitude; about him the text saith: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master a servant which is escaped<sup>1</sup>."

But they shall ask of his master to write for him a release, and the value of his freedom, and when the hand of the slave shall attain thereto he shall pay it unto him. And if the master be not willing to set him free, then shall the Sanhedrin proclaim his freedom and he shall go forth.

*Idem*, 268.

An old man, or one who is sick, or one in trouble, who hardeneth his heart and will not accept charity, behold such an one is guilty of

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiii. 15.

shedding his own blood, and his trouble is naught but iniquity and sin.

Yet one who is forced to seek charity, but fretteth himself and deferreth the evil hour, and passeth through the ordeal in order that he may not trouble the congregation, verily he shall not die, but live to provide for the need of others.

Of him the text saith: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord<sup>1</sup>."

*Idem*, 255.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xvii. 7.

ELSIE DAVIS.

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